

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE DOCTOR'S MIXTURE.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XII. CAPTAIN MOLYNEUX.

THE small town of Tilston, since we last departed from it, had gone on in its old course. The crimson tide of soldiery had been pulsating through its arteries, giving it a healthful vigour; though, as regards the young ladies of the place, there was what might have been called over-excitation. The warriors were now domesticated in the place: they had grown accustomed to the little town, and had made friends there. Mr. Hickey still remained in the regiment, in a sort of mitigated Coventry; Colonel Bouchier dined about the country, and grew more popular; Lord Shipton still kept what he called "open house" at the place his friend the Doctor had rechristened Hungry Hall, with his meagre daughters still on hand; while Mr. Ridley was as insanely furious as ever against his enemy, Doctor Findlater. The excitement of the grand episode, or scandal as some called it, of the Leader marriage had somewhat abated, and public attention was now settling on the remaining daughter of the Doctor—Polly—who was now the undisputed belle of the place. Her attractions had latterly very much increased, and the hail of compliments and sweet speeches which were showered on her, had contributed to raise her opinion of her own charms. To say that she had become a flirt was only what could be said of almost every girl exposed to such temptations; that is to say, she now lived upon admiration, looked forward to fresh doses of it every day; and found the entertainment so fascinating, that it made her disregard her own positive interests. This is the

rock on which the coquette makes shipwreck. But flirt or coquette soon becomes too indulgent a title for the young lady who directs her operations against a whole regiment: in spite of herself, she is driven gradually to become a sort of Franc-tireur, for flirting entails what is called jilting or being jilted, which leads to the unfeeling barbarities of a guerilla warfare. Where there has been slaughter, reprisals follow as a matter of course, and the flirt is speedily converted into what is known in military slang as a garrison hack. It was hard to think that the fresh, natural, blooming Polly, who spoke her very thoughts, and showed her delight or dislike by the coming or departing colour in her cheek, should be unconsciously hurrying to secure a commission in this unenviable troop. Yet it seemed too probable, now that the judicious and watchful sister was gone, with whom every night she was, as it were, obliged to give her conscience a searching examination.

The Doctor, with his hand shading his eyes, was anxiously scanning the horizon, to make out objects of far more importance. He had not time to think of Polly's little pranks; he looked on her, too, as a sort of child. So, when this little cheerful bird of the woods and bushes began to furnish serious gossip for the place, and her pretty name was coupled with Mr. Molyneux's—But we must go back a little to see how this gentleman came upon the scene.

When one of the obscurer officers exchanged to go to India, there came in his place, from an hussar regiment ordered there, Captain Molyneux, one of the showiest, handsomest men that had been seen in the place for years. In his face was a sort of insolent, critical inquiry as to everything that was said or was looked; or, as a

junior officer without much command of words put it, a sort of "who-the-deuce-are-you" expression—a bold, smiling defiance, and an air of superiority. He had, besides, the true vainqueur air, and well knowing he was admired by ladies, took a sort of assured proprietorship, as if they were mere children, and he were their master. Not very long before, this captivating gentleman had been in want of money, and seeking to repair his fortunes, resolved to do so by marrying for money; and, accordingly, he selected a poor, spare, unhealthy little person, who had plenty of money, and who fell into worse health when her manufacturing father refused to consent to the marriage. It accordingly took place. The money lasted for a time; but her real fortune, which was the expectancy of all that her father had, soon after was lost in a commercial crash. The handsome Molyneux never forgave his wife this injury. Henceforth she was dragged about from barrack to barrack, as part of his camp equipment: a neglected wife, that most piteous spectacle of a poor shred of a woman striving all day long to sustain her miserable part, and hide from the world the open rebuffs, and almost insults, she is always receiving.

The arrival, then, of this gentleman was quite an event at Tilton. As that spot had hitherto enjoyed a sort of pastoral immunity from any worldly depravity, he was regarded with a sort of mysterious alarm and interest. The daughters glanced slyly at him as their mothers gave a wholesome warning, and, in truth, declined to accept so harsh a construction of this elegant hero. When he was seen "at the band," lounging magnificently, his poor thread-paper of a wife following, of whose presence he seemed unconscious, it was secretly pronounced that, after all, it must be her fault, she was such a poor, foolish sort of creature. Presently it became known that they had taken the genteel lodgings next door to the Doctor's, and so lately vacated by young Cecil Leader—lodgings heartily recommended by the Doctor himself.

"A fine handsome fellow that," said the Doctor, "who's only done what, God knows, many of us do! made a mistake in choosing a companion."

His own family were against him in this view, and were all on the side of the neglected wife. Who was so vehement as Polly! How her bright eyes sparkled and kindled, as she denounced this barbarous

treatment of a poor woman! She became the warmest friend of the persecuted lady, and when she was careful to ascertain that the captain had gone out, ran in, through the garden, to sit with her, and hear all her sorrows. A prudent friend or relation ought to have discouraged this excessive sympathy; but, alas! Katey had gone forth in the world, and no one, so strongly or firmly as Katey, could have speedily "put order" to such a situation.

The handsome captain, as he was called, soon discovered Polly: and almost as soon, her aversion to him, and championship of his wife. Once or twice Polly surprised him in the house by her visits, when she was sure he had gone out. How she coloured, how her eyes flashed, and how she hesitated and resolved not to stay, yet was ashamed to retreat. The handsome captain's voice had sounded loud and boisterous, as he came up-stairs. He surveyed her with a quiet look of insolent mischief.

"Don't go," he said, "Miss Polly; I am going. I know you hate me." Polly coloured more furiously still. "Hate away," he said. "No lady ever began hating me that did not end by liking me."

Polly had such a gay, mischievous temper that she often sacrificed her dignity to her sense of a pert repartee. Lifting her eyes shyly, yet roguishly, she said: "So I can see!"

He laughed: "Oh, so you can see, if you take it the other way. But I am right still. Mrs. Chester Molyneux," he said, bowing to his unhappy wife, "can attest to the contrary of what you say."

"Nothing of the kind," said Polly, indignantly; "and it is a great shame——"

"What, causing people to like me? After all I am not so bad as I am painted. What would you say if I ended by making you like me?"

"Never! never!" said Polly, vehemently, "so long as I live."

"Well, we shall see," said the handsome captain, rising to go. "It rests upon my honour to remove these prejudices. I don't deserve them. Ask her."

Polly would ask nothing, and only bade him go away. If he was to stay there for years, he would never get her to like him. He retired singing, and she remained to sympathise with her friend.

The Doctor laughed heartily at this vendetta, and admired his Polly for her pluck. He himself thought the captain a good, pleasant fellow enough, more sinned against than sinning, and whom, from his

soul, he pitied in the yoke with that poor quishkeen of a wife—what *was* a quishkeen?—who, so far from being able to say “bo” to such a respectable bird as a goose, could not even say “whish to a midge.” Captain Montague, the dilettante officer, still patronised Polly, and came to lend her books of poetry, which she never read with the appreciation expected, though it is to be feared the not too stretched code of truth in which the Doctor had reared his family, caused Polly to affect a greater acquaintance with the works in question than she had really made.

“I declare, Peter,” said the lively girl, “he’s not like a man at all; more like a schoolmaster setting lessons. Sure, look what he’s brought me to write out in my extract-book. How can I be wasting my time on such things? I’ve no extract-book. Did you ever hear the likes of this, Peter?” And the young lady read, with a good imitation, too, of the rather clerical manner of Mr. Montague:

— O that deep immeasurable,
The broad human heart, in which I long
To lave my weary pinions! There unsteady
Ripples mine image till, at last resolved,
In some fair mirror I can see myself.

Polly burst into a scream of laughter as she finished. “Did you ever hear the like, Peter?”

“A bathing-machine would be the thing for that fellow,” said her father, smiling. “But, my dear, there’s a little blank pre-script book of mine below which you can have. The virgin page has never yet been defiled with ink, so copy it out in your daintiest pothooks. Not that I think our friend will prove arable pasture. Deuce a blade of grass I’ll ever raise off him. Lord forgive him for all my wasted dinners, which he’ll have to account for one day!”

It was just at this time that the Doctor went away on his “errand of mercy,” as he called it, and returned triumphant with his son-in-law and his daughter. That was something to talk of, and, indeed, it made a sensation in the place.

“By Jove, sir, you ought to be sent as ambassador to Paris,” said the honest Bouchier, wringing him cordially by the hand; “you are the cleverest fellow I ever met. Taken the place by assault; lodged yourself in the Fort. You’ll have them all at your feet yet.”

These compliments the Doctor modestly disclaimed. Every one in the place was talking of it; for the hostility of the great family had become well known, as well as

the purpose Mrs. Leader had in view. This seemed a masterly coup; for it was felt, that once established in possession, the Doctor’s daughter could not be turned out with decency. The Doctor’s persistent enemy, Mr. Ridley, alone sneered and talked of trickery, and said there was some scheming on foot; mark his words if something did not come out, and that before long too. If he was to spend every shilling he would expose the scoundrel yet. It was disgraceful to have such a fellow in the parish as one of their salaried officials. The Doctor had grown quite accustomed to these denunciations, for they were, of course, duly repeated to him, and said that “he could afford to smile at old Ridley’s wool-gatherings.” But it was noticed that he was always deprecating, and even obsequious to that gentleman, who scarcely condescended to notice him.

CHAPTER XIII. A FRESH ATTACK.

It was now the morning after the arrival of the Leader family that a servant of the mansion came into the town, and was seen going to the Doctor’s house. The Doctor was in his study enjoying one of th’ ‘avanahs; with Polly prattling away over her conquests, and rehearsing how capitally she “put down that odious Moly-neux.” It was then that the Doctor’s man—for he had lately brought over a man who had been with him before in one of those strange adventures through which the Doctor had passed—entered with the letter from the Fort. The Doctor looked at the writing, threw the end of his cigar into the grate, and flourished the letter over his head.

“What did I tell you, girl?” he cried; “trust Peter for the science of manipulating! Old yellow skin yonder has hauled down her colours. What did I tell you? Nothing like the waiting game!”

Polly, excited, drew near to look over her father’s shoulder, and read:

MRS. LEADER presents her compliments to Doctor Findlater, and desires that he will not continue his further attendance on Mr. Cecil Leader, as she has made arrangements to secure another medical adviser. She must also request that Doctor Findlater will, in future, dispense with any visits to Leadersfort, for reasons which Doctor Findlater will understand. Mr. Cecil Leader and his wife may, of course, remain for the present, but Doctor Findlater will spare

himself much mortification by receiving this intimation as it is meant.

Polly coloured as she read this despatch: "What does she mean, Peter?"

The Doctor's face was contorted with fury. "How dar' she address such a thing to me. Th' old meagre skin-and-weazle! Th' old hungry scarecrow! Th' old bit o' wizened frizzle! The miserable, yellow-fevered, jaundiced scarecrow! What right has she to dar' send me such a thing!" The Doctor was almost eloquent in this strange vituperation. "Turn me out of my child's house! Oh! that's the game, is it! I'll make her grovel yet, I will! If I was to scrape the flesh from my bones, I'll rub her face in the very clay off my boots! She don't know Peter Findlater yet!"

"Ah, what can ye do, Peter," said his daughter, "if they won't let you in?"

"Hold your tongue, you foolish child; don't bother me! Where's my hat? I'll put this right before the day grows old. Here, give me my chapoo—I'll chapoo them. Polly, pet, no woman ever put an affront on Peter Findlater yet, that he didn't get satisfaction from her or a male deputy."

Polly looked at him with pride as she handed him his "chapoo" and gloves; she seemed like some lady-love arming her knight for battle. "Ah, Peter, you were always tender of the family name. Was there ever such impertinence? And we now connected with the family!"

"Collater'ly, my pet. Leave it to me, I'll give my connexions a first lesson in behaviour."

The Doctor strode out of the house and made his way to Leadersfort. He did not go up the grand avenue, which, as he said, "could be raked from th' enceinte of the fortress," every window in it commanding a sweep a mile long. So he took a detour and came up almost to the hall-door, through some plantations, and skirting under the shelter of the house, came to the door, and gave a violent ring at the bell. It was opened by one of the grand town menials, who, as soon as he saw the visitor, narrowed the opening promptly, and filled the remaining space with his own portly person.

"Mr. Leader in?" said the Doctor, sweetly.

"Not at home," said the menial, bluntly.

"Mrs. Leader in?" said the Doctor, making a step forward. "I'm Doctor Find-

later, my man. You're strange here, so it's natural you shouldn't know I'm Mr. Cecil's father-in-law. I'll just go up and run my physician's eye over him."

"Sorry," said the menial in the same blunt way, "but you can't. Family ain't at home."

"Ah, God bless my soul," said the Doctor, roughly; "don't be humbugging me!" a favourite word, on whose second syllable he always laid a stress. "Now, stand aside, my good fellow; you're going beyond your orders."

"That's just what I don't do," said the menial with a grin. "And you're not to come in here!" Then closed the door suddenly.

The Doctor, furious and stupefied for a moment, thought of rushing round to the back and forcing an entrance, but that seemed mean and housebreaker-like. Boiling with rage he strode down the avenue, not knowing "what next to be at."

"It's that little bleating cur Leader that's turned tail. I'll hold him answerable for his low parvin-you woman and her tricks. I'll make his corns clatter in his boots; I'll make his coat too big for him. Not one of the whole kit of you," added the Doctor, turning back to apostrophise the house, "will be a match for Peter. Whisht, soho!" He saw a little black figure coming across a bypath through the fields, and stepped behind a tree to wait for him.

Mr. Leader was coming along with a worried look, for fresh expenses had been reported as necessary up at his farm-yard, and he was thinking over the question he had oftenest put to himself, "Where am I to get the money?" when the Doctor came out in front of him like a brigand. The little man was scared.

"Going to the house, Mr. Leader? Just where I came from myself, and where I've been once more—insulted!"

"Insulted, Doctor Findlater?"

"Yes, sir, in all the length and breadth of the word. There's a limit to most things, Mr. Leader, and by th' immortal shako there shall be to this. I can't let Mrs. Leader go pelting me and mine with mud, without a protest, with my daughter as a hostage in your house. Sir, my status quo ante is altered, sir. I'll not put up with it, and I must have satisfaction."

"Satisfaction!" faltered Mr. Leader, edging away.

"Oh! don't be afraid—not in that sense. But I look to you, sir, to vindicate me. I shall not have doors shut in my face with

my daughter on the other side of them. Come, Mr. Leader, didn't you tell me you were no ornamental figure-head in this house—you're not going to take orders from any one in your establishment?"

"Of course not; and there is no need of putting things in that way."

"Oh, but there is, my dear sir! The time is come for me to call a spade a spade. Things had best be put on a good footing; and I call on you, sir, to vindicate my position, or I must vindicate it myself."

"I'm sure there's some mistake," said Mr. Leader; "she couldn't think of such a thing."

"That there is; so let us go back," said the Doctor, promptly, "to the house, and you shall clear it up. No man better."

And taking the unhappy Mr. Leader by the arm, he marched him hurriedly towards the hall-door of the Fort.

Within her castle the true commander of the garrison was taking thought of her future plans. She saw many difficulties in the way, and, above all, there were soldiers of the enemy within the fortress. Yet, though Mary Leader, cold, and much changed, and dangerous, had done her cause serious mischief, and her step-daughter wore a vigilant air that betokened danger for the future, Mrs. Leader bore no hostility to her compared with what she felt towards Katey Leader, as we may now fairly call her. The very sound of that name, the very sense of her presence in the house—that entry enforced in spite of her—used to rack and tear her soul.

"You have established yourself here," she said; "but, you must understand it, entirely against my wishes. Not but that if I had chosen to insist on the matter, you must have left the house. I hope you understand this clearly."

Katey, proud, yet tearful and submissive, stands before her: "I only wish, madam, to watch over my husband—to nurse him."

"Yes; that is the disgraceful part of the transaction—the husband you and your people entrapped into your house! One of your father's disreputable tricks."

"Nothing against my father, madam," said Katey, with trembling voice, and raising her head; "whatever you please against me."

"You shall not impose any conditions in our house, if you please," said the other,

with a grim smile. "If you do not like the conversation, you can withdraw."

"If my father were here, he would make his name respected. I shall try and do so in his absence."

"Name respected, indeed! Fine name, fine respect! Only wait, and we shall find how creditable his life was: there are people on the look-out already."

Katey coloured. "These slanders have been uttered before now against him; but they have done him no harm. They never shall, please goodness!"

"Ah, you shall see! And let me warn you—don't interfere with what goes on in this house, or with Mr. Leader's daughter and our plans for her. Recollect you are here as an intruder and on sufferance."

The two ladies were standing up in the drawing-room opposite each other. Some one entering caught up the words, "My Katey an intruder and on sufferance! Oh no! surely not. Mr. Leader, I ask you plainly, is Katey here on sufferance, or an intruder?"

That little man now appeared: "Oh, dear, no! I never said so."

"This man here again! Oh! this is too much," said Mrs. Leader, all but stamping on the ground. "How dare you intrude yourself here again after my letter?"

The Doctor placidly turned and pointed to Mr. Leader.

"Yes," said the lady bitterly. "You can bully him. That is a proper person to be the head of a house, who cannot protect his wife in her own house, or save her from the intrusion of adventurers! Whoever heard of such a thing—that a fellow like this shall come and go as he likes, and insult me as he pleases, by his presence? He can make you afraid of him."

"Afraid," said Mr. Leader, excitedly; "oh, not at all. And as for bullying, you shouldn't talk that way. At the same time, Doctor Findlater, I wish you would not be coming. You see what confusion it brings about, such worry and annoyance; so I must beg you won't come again."

Mrs. Leader waited without a word.

"Yes," said Mr. Leader, getting courage, "that is—after this visit. It's no use, you know; Mrs. Leader's wishes must be consulted."

"Well," said the Doctor, looking at him from head to foot, "this is a piteous spectacle! Where's the bold language we heard yesterday, and on the gravel-walk five minutes ago? My dear sir, you won't let yourself be put down low in the orchestra

—y' understand—with the second violin thrust into your fingers? Take a friend's advice, and keep the position you're entitled to as master in your own house. However, all this is neither here nor there. Of course, I don't want to come to any house where it is desired I should be absent by both parties. My sole object," added the Doctor, as if making a speech, "was to assert myself, to vindicate myself under oppression. To prevent myself being trampled under foot before the servants. Well, I have done so, I have ray'abilated myself successfully, and gained my ends, and now take leave to withdraw." And with great dignity the Doctor bowed to all round, and retired. He certainly had been worsted in this skirmish, though he had withdrawn in good order; but he had too much tact not to see that if he continued the struggle further after the present demonstration he would be "in the wrong box." He never lost dignity in defeat. And so bowing to all round, he withdrew.

THE HOTEL CHAOS.

To say that Chaos is come again is a tolerably common locution for expressing an excessive amount of confusion; but there need not be the slightest fear of the return of the Hotel Chaos. It can never come again. It was too rich of its kind, too peculiar, too overwhelming in its characteristics, to bear repetition. Among chaotic things it was unique, and, on the whole, it may be esteemed a matter for congratulation that there never could have been by any possibility but one Hotel Chaos, and that, in all human probability, there never will be another. There are limits even to disorder, and the acutest ravings of mania must have their turn. The Hotel Chaos was the maddest hostelry ever known, or ever dreamt of. It did its work; it reached its consummation; it burst; and it can be no more restored to its pristine shape than can one of those paper bags which schoolboys inflate with their breath until they are as plump as a balloon ready to start, and then, with smart concussion from the palms of their hands, rend into irremediable fragments.

I never enjoyed the felicity of a bed at the Hotel Chaos, which, to have been consistent, should have been fitted up, in the way of sleeping accommodation, with padded rooms, frequented by laundresses bringing home nothing but strait-waist-

coats as clean linen from the wash. A room at the Hotel Chaos! Bless you, such a thing was an infinity of cuts above me, and was meat for my masters—marshals of France, grand provosts, and similar grandees. I don't think they took in anybody lower in rank than a deputy-assistant commissary-general, and it is not probable that I shall ever attain a grade so exalted. There had been, to be sure, a few modest civilians, despicable creatures, with not so much as a solitary ribbon of the Legion of Honour among them, who had been fortunate enough to obtain apartments at the Chaos, before the hotel went hopelessly and stark-staringly mad; and as these contemptible creatures (who were mainly Englishmen) were content to pay about seventy-five per cent more for their board and lodging than the grandees were willing to disburse, the landlord—a covetous rogue with but scant patriotism in him—was naturally reluctant to turn these ignoble, but lucrative, customers into the street. Ere long, however, a dashing member of the staff of Field-Marshal Bombastes Furioso was heard to ask the proprietor how long it would be before he put "tout ce tas de pékins à la porte"—before he expelled all those cads of civilians; and so shortly afterwards the proprietor—really much against the grain, I am willing to believe—began to grow insolent to the civilian cads, and to hint that their rooms were required for "Messieurs les Militaires;" that General Fusbos couldn't wait any longer, that Colonel Grosventre must really be accommodated, and that Milord Smith, Count Thompson, and Sir Brown must find lodgings elsewhere. Smith, Brown, and Thompson, quiet souls, well aware that in war time the toga must cede to the tunic, meekly withdrew from the foul and wretched garrets where for sums varying from ten to fifteen francs a day they had been suffered to hide their degraded heads; but, although ostracised from the upper rooms, they were by no means free, financially, from the exaction of the Hotel Chaos. It was one of the myriad humours of this bedlamite establishment that your bill, if you didn't stop in the house, had a tendency to grow longer than had been its custom when you did stop. But how was a bill possible at all, you may ask. Thus. The Hotel Chaos was the only place in the maniacal city of Moriah where you could get a decent breakfast or dinner, and where tolerable coffee, liquors, and cigars could be obtained. Moreover, as the chief madmen of Moriah were

always congregated at the Chaos, and as, in its *salle à manger* and its court-yard, all that was notable and worth studying in the way of hallucination, foaming at the mouth, homicidal mania, epilepsy, demoniacal possession, hysteria, melancholia, kleptomania, hypochondriasis, dipsomania, and midsummer madness, was sure to be visible and audible at all hours of the day and night; as, within its walls, there was a perpetual narration of tales told by idiots, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing; of visions so wild and fantastic, that Ossian read tamely, and Emmanuel Swedenborg flatly afterwards; and of lies so grandiose and so impudent that Marco Polo or Sir John Mandeville might have sickened with envy to hear them—you were perforce impelled to make of the Hotel Chaos a common news-room, exchange, and lounge. You breakfasted and dined at the table d'hôte; you smoked and took your demitasse, or your seltzer-and-something, on the terrace overlooking the court-yard—shaking sometimes in your shoes, miserable civilian cads as you were, at the knowledge of the close propinquity of Marshal Bombastes and General Fusbos, and sometimes of a plumed and embroidered aide-de-camp of the great Emperor Artaxomines himself. Thus, you “used” the Hotel Chaos, although you had no bed there, and you were always heavily in debt to the waiter. If you wanted to pay him for your dinner, he had no change; and when you had no change—and nothing to change, perchance, for ready money was apt to run wofully short in the mad city of Moriah—he was sure to present a bill exhibiting a fabulous back score of breakfasts, dinners, demitasses, and petits verres, and impetuously demanded payment. If you demurred, he threatened you with the grand provost. He knew you to be a miserable cad of a civilian, only fed upon sufferance, incessantly watched and followed about by the gendarmerie and by police agents in plain clothes, and he also knew that the propriety of your expulsion altogether from Moriah was debated every day by some of the grantees in cocked hats and epanulettes. The best thing to do was to conciliate the waiter with humble and obsequious phrases, and, giving him silver money for himself, promise to pay the bill—usually a mere schedule of fictitious items—that afternoon. Under those circumstances you were tolerably safe; for in five minutes the head-waiter usually forgot all about you. He had dunned somebody else successfully, or the

still small voice of conscience had deterred him from making another attempt to fleece you; or—which is the likeliest hypothesis of all—his intermittent fit of madness had come on, and he had gone up-stairs to tear his hair, and claw his flesh, and gnaw the bedclothes, and howl till he was hoarse, according to the afternoon custom of the men of Moriah.

Moriah, I may take occasion to observe, lest I should get benighted in the maze of allegory, was, in sane parlance, the fortified city of METZ, the head-quarters, at the end of the month of July last, of the Army of the Rhine, of the Imperial Guard of France, and of the Emperor Napoleon the Third, who, with his young son, the Prince Imperial, his cousin, Prince Napoleon, a brilliant staff, and a sumptuous following, were lodged at the Hotel of the Prefecture. Marshals Le Bœuf and Bazaine, General de Saint Sauveur (the grand provost), General Soleil, commanding the artillery of the Guards, and a glittering mob of generals, colonels, and aides-de-camp of the Guards, the staff, and the line, were at the Hotel Chaos.

But, be it borne in mind that, when I speak of the Chaotic Inn, my statement must be taken with a slight reservation or allowance. You may be horror-stricken at the confession that there were two Hotels Chaos in Metz, and that, to this day, I cannot remember with exactitude which was which. They were in the same street, the Grande Rue Colneyhatchi, I think, exactly opposite one another: each with a court-yard, each with a terrace, each with head-waiters, who presented you with extortionate bills, each full of marshals, generals, colonels, and aides-de-camp: in fact, as like unto one another as two peas, or the two Dromios, or Hippocrates's Twins. One, I am inclined to think—but Reason totters on her throne—was called the Grand Hôtel de Metz. The other—but my brain burns with volcanic fierceness when I strive to recal it—was known as the Grand Hôtel de l'Europe. It is my firm conviction that, for the major portion of the edibles and potables I consumed at the Grand Hôtel de Metz, I paid the waiter at the Grand Hôtel de l'Europe, and vice versa. It did not matter much, then, for there was a solidarity of insanity between them, and both were integral parts—if any integrity could be in that which was normally and essentially disintegration—of the Hotel Chaos. It matters less now; since, for aught we know, both hotels have

been burnt to the ground, or shattered by bomb-shells, and nothing remains within the huge earthworks of Metz but charred beams and crumbling brickwork, and dust and ashes. Perhaps the head-waiters at the two caravansaries—I have heard that a fierce mutual hatred existed between them—have eaten one another.

Let me strive to embody some fleeting memories of that demented time. There is breakfast. We that were English in Metz, a feeble folk, continuously snubbed by the military authorities, and harassed by the police, and pursuing an arduous vocation under all manner of slights, discouragement, and obstacles, usually made a rendezvous to breakfast together at the same time—about half-past ten. There was canny Mr. M'Inkhorn, from the Land o' Cakes, special correspondent of The Bannockburn Journal and Peck o' Maut Advertiser, who, in the performance of his duties as a war-scribe, was chronically perturbed in mind by the thought that he had left unfinished in North Britain a series of statistical articles on the Sanitary Condition of Glen M'Whisky. There was Mr. Mercutio, once gallant and gay, now elderly and portly, who was called Philosopher Mercutio in early life, and wrote that celebrated work on the Rationale of the Categorical Imperative as correlative to the Everlasting Affirmation of Negation, and who now laughed, and gossiped, and drank kirschwasser all day long, and wrote war-letters to a High Tory evening paper all night. He had brought his son with him, an ingenuous youth, in a grey tweed suit, who was his sire's guide, philosopher, and friend; controlled him gently in the matter of kirschwasser, was the profoundest cynic and the shrewdest observer for his age I ever met with, and who otherwise, from sunrise to sunset, did nothing with an assiduity which was perfectly astonishing. There was mild-eyed Mr. Sumph, of Balliol, who indited those fiery letters from Abyssinia during the campaign, and had a special faculty while in Metz for getting arrested as a Prussian spy. There were a brace of quiet, harmless, industrious artists belonging to English illustrated newspapers, pilgrims of the pencil, who had wandered, in discharge of their functions, to the Crimea, to Italy, to India, to China, to the Isthmus of Suez, and to the banks of the Chickahominy, and who were now, in fear and trembling, making notes in their sketch-books of the most salient madneses of Metz susceptible of pictorial

treatment. And especially there was Mr. O'Goggerdan, of the Avalanche, a small man, but of a most heroic stomach, and of venturesomeness astounding. He had been, they said, a colonel of American Federal cavalry, a Confederate bushwhacker, a Mexican guerillero, a Spanish contrabandista, a Garibaldino, one of the Milia di Marsala of course, a Fenian centre, and a Pontifical Zouave. He was Dugald Dalgetty combined with Luca Fa Presto; doubling the rapier of the practised swordsman with the pen of the ready-writer. A wind blowing from Fleet-street, London, had brought these strangely-assorted people together: the philosopher, the elder, the Oxford fellow, the painter, the soldier of fortune, were all bent on achieving the same task, and were all occasionally partakers of that misery which makes us acquainted with such very strange bedfellows.

When the customary salutations of the morning were over, when we had inquired whether any of our number had been arrested as spies during the preceding evening, and when we had striven to ascertain whether there were any news from the front—it was just after Saarbrück—and when we had, as usual, been baffled in our attempt, we fell to discussing a very substantial breakfast à la fourchette, to which dropped in, between eleven and noon, group after group of artists in the great drama, of which the first scene had, as yet, been but ill played. It is possible that I may be rather understating than overstating the fact, when I assume that three-fourths of the French people we used to meet every morning at breakfast, and who, as a rule, treated us with infinite scorn and contumely—it is true that as civilian cads we had no business there, and should have been hiding our heads in squalid auberges suited to our degree—are by this time dead and buried, or scattered to the four winds of heaven; in exile, in captivity, or in other ruinous and irremediable dispersion. Of the mere bald aspects and trite humours of a French garrison town, with which most of us who have made even a week's trip to the Continent must be familiar, I should be ashamed to treat; and Metz in ordinary times had been, I doubt it not, as dull and trite a place as its hundred and one congeners among French garrisons. A great deal of drumming and a great deal of bugling; much swaggering about streets and leering under feminine bonnets on the part of portly captains and wasp-waisted lieu-

tenants, and of shiftlessly dawdling and futile pavement beating on the part of gaby-faced soldiers, not over clean, and with an inch and a half of coarse cotton shirt visible between the hem of their undress jackets and the waistband of their red pantaloons; much moustache twisting, tin-canful of soup carrying, absinthe tipping, and halfpenny cigar smoking; these were the most salient features of French military life, and they were as well known to the majority of educated Englishmen as the manners and customs of the metropolitan police. But when Metz went mad with the war fever early in August, 1870, her military guise underwent a development so extensive and so exceptional, that the spectator of many strange scenes in many strange countries may be warranted in sketching the things he saw without being open to the charge of telling a thrice-told tale. To our breakfast-table at the Hotel Chaos came officers—few of them below the rank of captain—from every branch of the French military service. The Imperial Guard were the most numerous represented; for at Metz were the imperial head-quarters, and the Cent Gardes mounted sentry at the Prefecture. Their lieutenant did not condescend to breakfast with us; but he frequently deigned to take coffee and kirsch on the terrace. I see him now, a sky-blue giant—I mean that his tunic was sky-blue—with a fat, foolish face. For the rest he was all epaulettes, and jack-boots, and buckskins, and aiguillettes, and buttons, and sword and sash, and splendour generally. I used to reckon him up, and calculate that at the lowest valuation he could not be bought, as he stood, for less than a hundred and fifty pounds. His boots alone must have been worth three pounds ten. I used, I own, to envy him. To what surprising stroke of good luck did he owe his commission in the cream of the Prætorians; in the Golden Guard of Cæsar? Had he been born to greatness? had he achieved it? or had greatness been thrust upon him in consequence of his breadth of chest and length of limb? What a position! Here was a fortunate youth, obviously not more than five-and-twenty years of age, who was privileged to mount guard on Cæsar's staircase, and before the curtains of the alcoves of the empress. He had been at all the grand Tuileries balls; at all the state ceremonies in the Great Hall of the Louvre, at the imperial hunts at Fontainebleau and Compeigne. The faces of half the kings

in Europe must have been familiar to him; and as for princes, princesses, senators, members of the Institute and Grands Croix of the Legion of Honour, they must have been to his sated vision the smallest of small deer. Yet here was this ambrosial creature—this happy combination of the Apollo Belvedere and Shaw the Life Guardsman—for I am sure that he was as brave as he was beautiful—sipping his coffee and kirsch, and smoking his cigar, as though he had been an ordinary mortal. And,—no; my olfactory nerves did not deceive me: the cigar was a halfpenny one, a veritable Petit Bordeaux of the Régie. What has become of that gay and gallant Colossus by this time? It is some satisfaction to have the conviction that his corpse is not entombed in some dreadful trench in the blood-drenched fields of Alsace or Lorraine, for the Cent Gardes did not fight. After Sedan, the corps being abolished by a hard-hearted republican government, these sumptuous but expensive Janisaries retired into private life. By the way, what became of the real Turkish Janisaries? They were not all massacred by the Sultan Mahmoud; some few escaped. What became of those Mamelukes who were not cut to pieces by the troops of Mehemet Ali? What would become of our Beef-eaters, if a cruel House of Commons declined to vote the miscellaneous estimate necessary for their support? What becomes of the supernumeraries when the Italian Opera House closes—the men with the large flat faces, sphinx-like in their impassibility, the large hands, the larger feet, and the legs on which the “tights” are always in loose wrinkles, and which are frequently bandy? There is a strange faculty of absorption and engulfment in life. There are whole races of people who seem to “duck under,” as it were, and remain, quietly and comfortably submarine, while the great ocean overhead moans and struggles, or is lashed to frenzy in infinite surges. Some of these days, perchance, I shall meet a marker at billiards, or a “putter-up” in a bowling alley, an assistant at a hairdresser's, or a model in a life school, who may casually mention the fact that once upon a time he was a Cent Garde. Why not? I met a Knight of Malta in Spain, who was travelling in dry sherries; and I have heard of an ex-Dominican monk who at present follows the lively profession of clown to a circus. I have been aware of a baronet who earned his living as a photographer, and an un-

frocked archdeacon who sold corn and coals on commission.

They say that in the Prussian army every commissioned officer below the rank of major is bound to perform every day, in addition to his military duties, and ere ever he can think of recreation, a given task of serious study; precisely as though he were a schoolboy. He must draw some map, plan, or elevation, solve some problem in military mathematics, make an abridgment or an analysis of a portion of some technical work, or write some "theme" upon a given subject; say the causes of the Seven Years' War, the commissariat system of the Tenth Legion, or the amount of historical truth in the story of the battle of the Lake Regillus. To the enforcement of such an unbending course of mental as well as physical discipline the Prussian army may owe no inconsiderable portion of the success which has lately attended its operations in the field. Looking back upon the Hotel Chaos, and the huge camp of which it was the centre, I cannot help thinking that a little daily schooling, after the Prussian manner, would have done the paladins of Gaul an immensity of good. An hour's history, an hour's geography, an hour's mathematics a day, would have been scarcely felt by the multitude of officers who, their slight regimental duties at an end, were privileged, or rather condemned, for the remainder of the twenty-four hours, to do nothing but eat, drink, smoke, dawdle about the court-yard and the streets, and babble. Of female society, to refine or to amuse them, there was none, for the burgesses of Metz, a prudent race, so soon as ever the vanguard of the Grand Army appeared in sight, had locked up all their daughters, and seemingly sent all their pretty servant-maids home to their mothers. With a bright exception or two, the womanhood of Metz were about as engaging in aspect as Sycorax, mother of Caliban. There was a large and handsome theatre: but the company had been dispersed, and old ladies and little schoolgirls sat in the stalls and on the stage, all day long, scraping lint. The two billiard tables in the place had speedily collapsed. Of one the Third Chasseurs cut the cloth with their cues, and declining to pay for the damage, the proprietor closed the entire concern in a huff. I think some of the tables must have been let out as beds; at all events the sound of the clicking of balls grew fainter every day, while that of babbling grew louder. It was the babbling that drove the Grand Army mad. It was

the infinite babble that brought about Chaos. Of golden silence there was none; of silvery speech little; it was the age of bronze and brass swagger and braggadocio, mouthed by copper captains and smock-faced sous-lieutenants who, but a fortnight before had been schoolboys at St. Cyr. It would have been better for them to be at school still. Poor lads, I see them now, with their brand-new uniforms, which they were never tired of admiring when they could get near a mirror; the fresh lace glittering on collar and cuffs; the buttons scarce freed from the tissue paper in which they had been wrapped; the first sheen upon the sword scabbard; the varnish hardly dry on the belts, and in their bright boyish eyes the first exultation born of independence, of the consciousness of being men—of the rapture of the coming strife. Poor lads! poor lads! I hear their loose and idle talk, their vain boastings, their complacent disparagement of the Prussians, "mangeurs de choucroute," forsooth, whom they were going to "eat," without pepper or salt. One might have fancied Maffio Orsini and the rest gaily defying Donna Lucrezia at Venice. But what said that Borgia woman in the end? "You gave me a ball at Venice; I return it by a supper at Ferrara;" and then the lugubrious chant arose, *Nisi Dominus ædificat Domum*, and the seven monks with the seven coffins appeared in the doorway of the brilliant banqueting chamber. The answer to the defiance at Metz was at Wissembourg, at Woerth, and in the bloody shambles below Sedan. When I think upon these lads now, it is as though I had been down to a charnel house, and lived among corpses; and were I to meet one of the babblers of the Hotel Chaos in the street I should take him for a ghost.

Babbling, continual babbling, made the warriors dry, and it is not libellous, I trust, to hint that the army at Metz, ere the first tidings of discomfiture came, had grown to be—for Frenchmen, who in old times had a repute for temperance—a drunken army. Absinthe, kirsch, and cognac tipping went on all day and nearly all night at the Chaos, and the dissipation engendered by sheer idleness among the officers was not slow to spread among the rank and file, who, in their cups, not only babbled but brawled. For the rest there was Chaos outside as well as inside the hotels. The tradespeople of the town were doing a roaring business. Wholesale traders could sell as much meat, flour, wine, and forage

to the government as ever they could supply; and retail vendors could scarcely keep pace with the demand for flannel shirts, potted meats, sardines, sausages, razors and other cutlery, railway rugs, mattresses, canteens, pipes, cigar-cases, and other camp luxuries and campaigning comforts. The officers had all received their "*entrée en campagne*," a donation of so many hundred francs allotted at the commencement of war, and were never tired of shopping. They bought everything, except books. The court-yard of the Chaos used to be littered with packing-cases, kegs, sacks, packages, and tin cans: the private stores of the Grand Army. Vividly do I remember a most dashing turn-out belonging to General Soleil, of the artillery—a break, with the general's name and titles conspicuously painted upon it, and which was as handsome as ever paint and varnish, wheels of a bright scarlet, electro-silvered lamps and fittings, could make it. Every afternoon the general, with a select party of epauletted and decorated friends, used to take a drive about the town in this imposing vehicle, to which were attached four splendid grey Percheron horses, with harness of untanned leather. And then, a change of head-quarters being imminent, the break took in cargo for active service. Truffled goose-liver pies from Strasbourg, andouillettes from Troyes, pigs' feet from Sainte Menéhould, green chartreuse and dry curaçoa, fine champagne cognac, Huntley and Palmer's biscuits, Allsopp's pale ale—the capacity of the break had stomach for all these goodies, to say nothing of boxes of cigars in such numbers that as you passed the break you caught ambrosial whiffs, reminding you equally of the cedars of Lebanon and Mr. Carrera's tobacco-shop. I wonder who ate and drank all these dainties? Prince Frederick Charles? Bismark the omnivorous? or Hans Göbbell, full private in the Uhlans?

And so they went on in their madness, growing madder every day, and doing scarcely anything, as it subsequently turned out, to put the Grand Army in real fighting trim. The noise and hubbub, the babbling and boasting of the Chaos, became at last so intolerable, that I was fain to wander away, far from the revellers, far from the great Carnival of Insanity—down by the river banks—anywhere out of Bedlam, where there was some stillness and peace. Very often, late at night, I have crossed the bridge, and paced the broad esplanade before the Prefecture. A great silken banner

floated over the roof: two voltigeurs of the guard stood sentry by the gateway; from time to time dusty couriers would gallop up to the portals. Dragoon horses were picketed to the railings; and officers and orderlies would emerge, and mount, and spur away in hottest haste. Cæsar was there, Cæsar and the chiefs of the legions. Mine eyes were wont to sweep the long lines of windows, and wonder which of the brilliantly-lit rooms could be his. That upper chamber, perhaps, where the light burned so steadily and so late. There, I thought, at least were sanity, sagacity, foresight, and a wise prescience of possible disaster. In that upper chamber was the cold, calm, long-headed, imperturbable man, who nineteen years before, on the night when he made that coup d'état which gave him an empire, had sat with his feet on the fender in his room at the Elysée, slowly puffing his cigarette; and, to all the remonstrances and the objections of the timid, and the half-hearted, gave for answer, "Let my orders be executed." Nineteen years ago! It seemed but yesterday since I had stood in the Faubourg St. Honoré, looking at the brightly-illuminated windows of the Elysée, and wondering which was the room of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. He was the same man no doubt now, at Metz, as in the days when he put down liberty, equality, and fraternity by means of musketry—the same cold, calm, resolute Thinker and Doer, who wanted only his "orders executed." I had seen him twice at the railway station, and in the cathedral of Metz. He was not, they said, in very good health, and walked feebly. But he had always been somewhat shaky as regards the lower limbs. The mind was still of crystal, the will of iron, no doubt.

Error, delusion; and that which may be termed the deadeast of sells generally! There must have been ten thousand times more Chaos, more hallucination, delusion, and delirium in that room at the Prefecture last August than at the Hotel Chaos itself. Now the Prussians have got into Metz, I may pay another visit to the mad city, and the madder hotels. But I shall go in disguise—with green spectacles and a false nose; for Metz must be in a frightful state of impecuniosity by this time, and, pricked by the javelins of scarcity, the waiters may make such fearful demands on me for bygone—and fictitious—scores, that a life's earnings might not suffice to discharge the prodigious bill. They would expect me to pay the debts of the dead; and how

many of the lunatics who babbled in the court-yard must be by this time cold and silent!

FOR EVER.

For ever and ever the reddening leaves
Float to the sodden grasses.
For ever and ever the shivering trees
Cower and shrink to the chilling breeze,
That sweeps from the far off sullen seas,
To wither them as it passes.

For ever and ever the low grey sky
Stoops o'er the sorrowful earth.
For ever and ever the steady rain
Falls on bare bleak hill, and barren plain,
And flashes on roof and window pane,
And hisses upon the hearth.

For ever and ever the weary thoughts
Are tracing the selfsame track.
For ever and ever, to and fro,
On the old unchanging road they go,
Through dreaming and waking, through joy and
woe,

Calling the dead hours back.

For ever and ever the tired heart
Ponders o'er evil done.

For ever and ever through cloud and gleam,
Tracing the course of the strong life stream,
And dreary and dull as the broken dream,
For ever the rain rains on.

SIX MONTHS IN THE EAST.

ALEXANDRIA TO JERUSALEM.

"I've never been to Jerusalem, and I never mean to go, thank ye!" said the English engineer of the Russian steamer, "though I've been up and down these waters for these fifteen years, touching at Jaffa, and bein' within a day's ride of Jerusalem, as you may say, these twenty years. We see a precious deal too many o' them nasty pilgrims on board this boat for me to want to visit a place I know to be chock full o' them, for I hate pilgrims, mind you, as I hate pizon, and I'd give a good deal to keep altogether out o' their way."

There was something so wonderfully characteristic in the speaker's manner and appearance as he delivered himself of these sentiments, that I brought up the leader of our little party, whom we had dubbed our sheik, and introduced him formally. This engineer reminded me of an English landlord I once knew in Paris, who, though a modest and sensible man on most points, became boastfully rabid when proclaiming that he had "lived among mounseers these five-and-twenty year, and, thank Heaven, I don't know a single word of their blessed lingo!" In obstinate doggedness and perverted pride, in contempt for the observances they did not practise, and for beliefs and customs they could not under-

stand, both were intensely British; and when we smoked our final cigar on the poop before turning in for the night, we agreed unanimously that the ship's engineer was a character. The good steamer, the Emperor Alexander, is "in the pilgrim trade." We had come on board her at Alexandria, doubtful as to our treatment and accommodation, and prepared to rough it. There are three sets of steamers belonging to different companies which go from port to port in Palestine, but time was of importance to us, and we decided not to wait for either the English or the Austrian Lloyd's boat. Never were men better rewarded for meditated self-sacrifice. We were more comfortable than we had ever been at sea in our lives; and we were, look you, travellers of experience. The sheik has played the Arab, the Moor, and the Bedouin by the month together, living in the desert on camel's milk, and forming a devoted but, happily for his friends, a temporary attachment to his steed. Edward has been all over the globe, and is the author of stirring volumes of foreign travel and personal adventure; while George, who is a sybarite and an epicure, can tick you off the chief cities in Europe and America, giving in every instance the best hotel, and the particular dishes for which each is celebrated. The sheik is a man of fashion and a legislator—worlds would not draw from me whether hereditary or elected—and is an authority on art, antiquarianism, and archæology, as well as a ready and popular speaker on a score of other subjects. It has been for many years the privilege of your servant, the writer, to carry a musket in the army of letters, and all four of us are credited by partial friends with some knowledge of gastronomy and wine. This is our party. We plume ourselves upon the selection we made of travelling companions, as well as upon the stern determination with which we rejected all overtures from mere hotel acquaintances to join us; and we hold that when we unite in praising the cooking and service of an hotel or steamer, we furnish a testimonial which is not without value. All honour then to the Emperor Alexander, which left Alexandria on the 28th of November, 1869, and which landed us at Jaffa two days later. Her cabins were models of elegant comfort. At the end of the saloon was a handsome assortment of plants and flowers, so that the captain, when he took his chair at dinner, seemed to nestle in a bower of foliage and colour, which was very

refreshing to eyes weary with the endless sand of the Egyptian desert, and the monotony of the banks of the Suez Canal. The captain himself is an officer in the Russian navy, and an urbane polished man of the world, who looks to our comforts and forestals our wants with hospitable geniality. The stewards are as attentive as the servants to be met with in a well-organised private house, and they dress for dinner, putting on white cravats of depth, stiffness, and substantiality, such as were affected by the revered Brummel and his royal patron, and Berlin gloves of spotless hue. We like this. The sheik remarks sentimentally that it is a good sign; Edward tells anecdotes of waiters he has known in his travels from China to Peru, and proves, with logical minuteness, that cleanliness in a serving-man should be encouraged by at once sending him with a commission to the steamer's bar, while George becomes sentimental on the subject of dinners in general, and on that of the approaching Christmas Day in particular, wonders where he will eat it, and whether the occasion will be made blissful by the presence of a family retainer behind his chair.

We felt positively ashamed of our doubts concerning the capabilities of the Russian steamer, when we came to see its appointments, and the demeanour of its brisk, intelligent servants, to say nothing of the dainty dinner service, the spotless linen, the plates, and the flowers, all of which made us feel that our pilgrimage to the Holy Land was to be made easy indeed. With the exception of the drams of raw spirit, the cubes of salt fish, and the excellent caviare, which were handed round at the commencement of dinner, the repast was French in its character and cooking, and was good and elegant after its kind. There is some wine made from Crimean grapes, which we pronounce excellent, as we rise from table with a placid determination to explore the pilgrims' quarters, and to ascertain what their accommodation is like. Our delight was considerably modified by what we saw. The pilgrims were packed in little dens like those in which menagerie-keepers show their wild beasts, save that there were no bars. Two stories of these dens ran along both sides of the deck, and in each of them were exactly as many human beings as it would hold. Here were ragged priests in long black robes and fur caps like frozy grey muffs, peasants in sheep-skins which had been sewn on them

years before, and had never since been taken off, small Russian farmers and their wives and children, Turks, Armenians, and Egyptians, all bound for one or other of the ports of the Holy Land. They cooked, eat, slept, and prayed in their dens, and the pilgrims, in their abject filth and disorder, almost justified the abhorrence of the English engineer. They all appeared to be miserably poor. The Russian peasant who was a serf yesterday, and is a beast of burden hampered with superstition to-day, has been putting by small sums all his life for the grand work he is now upon. Before he started on his sacred errand he satisfied the authorities of Odessa, the port he took his passage from, that he had sufficient means to carry him to the Holy City and to bring him back, and he is now fulfilling the darling wish of his heart, for he is about to earn the sanctity only to be acquired by a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, and is already calculating on the relics he will take back. The Mahomedan in turban and clean robe, who turns to Mecca and prostrates himself the prescribed number of times, profoundly indifferent to surroundings and lookers-on; the black-robed Armenian, who lies on his stomach to engrave something in the Greek character upon a crumpled and dirty piece of paper; his brother ecclesiastic, who is even more ragged and less cleanly than himself, and who is absorbed in his book of prayer; and the swarthy, handsome silk-merchant from Damascus, who is on his way to join his brother's warehouse at Jerusalem, and who talks "shop," as 'cutely as a Yorkshire bagman, were types which were repeated many times in the course of our tour round the ship's decks. The saloon, with its elegant cabins and comfortable berths adjoining, together with the quarter-deck above, were as free from these passengers as if they belonged to another vessel; and there was every facility for walking, by means of platforms, bridges, and gangways, from one end of the ship to the other without touching the main deck. To do this was to pass at a safe distance over the double lines of dens, and to see the strange varieties of life they held. When night came on, and the rude curtains of the latter were drawn, and the flickering lamp lit up the faces of those within, the effect was weird in the extreme. There were more pilgrims on the fore-deck, mere squatters these, who paid a given price, and spread their bits of carpet and muffled themselves in turban and robe when

night came on, and were pitifully sick as the sea rose. But we saw enough to convince us that the pilgrim trade has many drawbacks, and to make us return to our own portion of the ship humble and grateful. Some well-dressed Russian pilgrims, who were our fellow-passengers in the saloon, had decidedly boiled their peas. They were bound for the Holy Places too, but they lived royally and drank hard, and were as little like religious enthusiasts as loose speech, loud voices, and convivial habits could make them.

We reached Port Saïd the morning after we left Alexandria, and put in there for some hours, taking in more pilgrims and much merchandise. What a change since we were last here just twelve days ago, when the Suez Canal was formally opened in the presence of crowned heads and celebrities from every country in Europe! The sheik and I strolled along the shores of the Mediterranean, and re-visited the gay kiosks where the Khedive and his royal guests sat, and where, for the first time in the history of the world, representatives of the Christian and Mahomedan faith offered up their prayers together to the common Father of all. There was something theatrical and unreal about these structures, now when we had them to ourselves, and there was neither clash of military music, thundering salutes from ships of war, nor stately processions of brilliantly dressed people on the yellow sands. We recalled and rehearsed the whole scene, the sheik mounting the tribune and occupying the seat of the fair Eugénie, and I standing where the empress's almoner—where is her almoner now?—Monsignor Bauer, had stood, and declaiming to my friend in humble imitation of that dignitary. The martial frame of the Crown Prince of Prussia, his broad, manly front, his handsome blue uniform and decorations, and the courtesies of the empress and of the Emperor of Austria, how these come before me as I write! The smiling lady who looked more beautiful and charming than we had thought possible, and the stalwart young soldier who was, by common consent, the most striking of the many striking figures there—how little did we foresee that one was fated to be the instrument of the other's deposition, and that, before twelve short months had passed, Fritz's gallant victories, and poor Eugénie's painful flight, would be the talk of Europe!

We strolled about the town of Port Saïd till the afternoon, seeing everywhere signs

of the glorious and never to be repeated pageant it had enjoyed, as well as of the vast multitude of labourers thrown out of employment by the completion of the canal, and rejoined our steamer, and were under weigh again by dinner-time. Looking out of my cabin window at six A.M. the next morning, I experienced a sensation I shall not readily forget; for I caught my first glimpse of the Holy Land. I hastily announced this to my friends, and we hurried on our clothes and were on deck upon the instant. Rolling mountains of purple and brown, partly obscured by mist and rain-clouds, and with a low lying range of red earth between them and the sea—such was Palestine as I beheld it first. We were some hours yet from Jaffa, but we knew it lay on yonder shores, and that we were approaching the scenes of the most solemn and thrilling, as well as the most familiar history in the world. It was difficult to believe in the situation, difficult to realise that we were about to carry out what I suppose every reader has dreamt of vaguely. There was something indescribably exciting in the thought, and I avoided the English engineer from this moment. His matter-of-fact practical observations would have jarred painfully upon my present frame of mind, for my anxiety to touch the sacred soil, and to drink in its inspirations, increased momentarily. We kept watch with field-glasses and telescopes, and only left the deck for the boat which conveyed us to the shore. Our experience on landing, and our arrangements with our dragoman, have already been recorded in these pages.*

Jaffa is to me a dream of golden groves of orange trees, strange Mahomedan burial-places, widely spreading verdure, turbaned figures, crumbling houses, veiled women, steep and narrow streets, noisy chaffering, and filth and dirt unspeakable. The Jerusalem Hotel, at which we stayed, is in the centre of what is known as the American colony, and outside the walls of the town. A very few years ago a new faith was preached in the United States. The Messiah was to appear forthwith, and on the shores of ancient Joppa, the Jaffa of to-day. A select number of true believers sold off their goods, and came hither to wait the great event; and a suburb of European cottages, built for the most part of wood, and in the centre of what we

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, vol. iv., p. 156.

should call cockney gardens, if we saw them at Brixton, is the result. We heard dismal stories of the fate of the misguided people who had built them, and their general air of desolation and premature decay made all credible. "The Sun Fire Office, London," on a metal plate over the front door of the hotel, looked strangely familiar, as did the cuttings from the Illustrated News which ornamented some of its walls; and when we mounted to its flat roof to view the adjacent country, and strain our eyes in the direction of Jerusalem, it was with a smile at the incongruities attending our early experiences of the Holy Land. The house of Simon the Tanner is pointed out in the town, but whatever may be the truth as to the site, the building itself is palpably modern, and we were content with a cursory inspection. We talked of the sieges of Jaffa, its importance in the time of the Crusades, the frequent shelling it has experienced, and the singular inefficiency of its defences. But we were eager to be off. We should return by way of Jaffa, our time in the Holy Land was limited, and we longed to set eyes on Jerusalem with the least possible delay. The horses brought us by Aleo Sulyman, our dragoman, were not very promising, and George, who is a man of great equine knowledge, insisted on his steed being changed before we had gone many hundred yards. Then our little cavalcade got fairly to work, and we were soon on our way, and slept that night at the Convent of Ramleh, half way between Jaffa and Jerusalem. Mahomedan tombs on the roadside, Mahomedan figures bowed in prayer, or stalking gravely on, a noisy crew of Arab merchants chaffering in the rude open market-place, and beggars clamouring for backsheesh, were all passed in the outskirts of the town. Miss Martineau and the Dean of Westminster, as well as other travellers, have remarked on the striking similarity between many of the natural features of Palestine and certain portions of England, and Derbyshire and Westmoreland were constantly before us as we went up to Jerusalem.

We were now on the high road to the Holy City, and were riding through a cultivated plain. The fields were irregular, and their divisions untidy; the husbandmen were in rags, and the cattle starved and poor; but the general features of the landscape, its stoniness, and the surrounding masses of purple hills, all reminded us of the stone-moors at home. The very

atmosphere was like a taste of England, after the baking air of Egypt. The sky was black and lowering, and a bleak and biting wind swept down from the mountains, bringing rain with it, the first we had felt or seen for many weeks. The road was in excellent order, quite up to the average of provincial highways in England, for the recent visit of the Emperor of Austria and the Crown Prince of Prussia to Jerusalem had put the Turkish governor of Palestine on his mettle, and forced labour and cruelly heavy taxation had enabled him to repair this road a few weeks before our visit. At Ramleh we were received hospitably by the good fathers, and had a dinner and wine served us of a quality which made us believe fully in the sternness of conventual discipline. It was when we were contemplating our quarters for the night—also of a strictly penitential character, and consisting of close and stuffy cells of limited proportions, holding three and two beds respectively—that we made the acquaintance of an Irish father, who, after conversing with the sheik in French, German, and Italian, put the question plainly, "were we English?" I shall not readily forget the richness of the brogue in which he retorted, "So om oi! don't I come from Dublin?"

Ramleh, which the Mahomedans insist is the Rama of Samuel, a tradition for which there is no satisfactory evidence, is a miserable spot. Seen from a distance its domes and edifices are imposing, and the stranger imagines he has before him a prosperous and important city. But the mirage of the desert is not more illusory than this first view. There are three convents and a couple of mosques in tolerable preservation, but the rest of the town is a mass of ruins which have once been houses, and of houses which are on the verge of becoming ruins. Save that it is a convenient resting-place between Jaffa and Jerusalem, it would receive but scant attention from wayfarers; but as it is, most travellers of the class who prefer to sleep beneath a roof so time their journey as to stay there the night.

Leaving Jaffa about two in the afternoon, we had spent rather more than three hours on the road; leaving Ramleh at six the next morning we passed under the Damascus Gate of the Holy City soon after two in the afternoon. The road continued in excellent condition all the way, but it wound along the sides of, and eventually crossed, the mountain ridges which hid Jerusalem

from our view. We met and overtook many people. There were gay devotees from Catholic countries, one of whom, a young Italian nobleman, in patent-leather hunting-boots, and jacket and knickerbockers of violet-coloured velvet, found infinite amusement in putting spurs into his high-mettled horse, galloping past our party like the wind, and then, after waiting for us to come up with and pass him, repeating the process, until George taught him what good jockeyship could do by beating him hollow in a mile race, and on what was little better than an Arab screw.

This gentleman was very eloquent on the sentimental advantages of a visit to the Holy Land, and the advantages it would give us in talking to ladies. He announced his intention of staying at a convent in Jerusalem, instead of at an hotel, as such "a sojourn" would be "more poetical." Now and again, too, we came upon a savage figure on horseback, armed to the teeth, the long gun athwart his shoulders, and the pistols and sword at his side, all looking as if they were in frequent use, while his flowing robes and loose turban streaming in the wind, his swarthy face, rude sandals, and bare feet, made him look both wild and picturesque. He was a Bedouin chief, who had come down from the country near Moab; or a dweller in one of the squalid villages to the right or left, whose experience of the road dated from the time when its little wayside refuges were sorely needed, and who could not bring himself to believe in the safety of travelling without arms. We saw no wheeled vehicles, and with the exception of a disabled cart or omnibus, which was lying uselessly at the roadside, met with none during our stay in Palestine. A wooden house borne by two mules, the occupant of which reposed at full length, and took a bird's-eye view of the country through the holes which did duty for windows, was the only substitute for a carriage we saw. Every one else, who rode at all, was mounted on camel, horse, mule, or ass, and in such portions of the country as we visited, the arrangements for locomotion have remained unaltered since the days of Abraham.

Through wooded slopes, with the small red-legged partridges running across the road, and almost under our horses' feet; past woods in which the locust-tree spreads forth its leaves, and where the palm grew rarer as we left the sea; by plains where the Oriental shepherd-boy might be seen

leading his flock, the black goats invariably keeping on his right hand, and the sheep on his left, in two compact masses, which never mingled, and which, it need be scarcely added, gave a new significance to the awful imagery of Scripture; by villages, the houses of which were in ruins, but where large plantations of the olive and the vine flourish on the terraced slopes; past, in particular, the village of St. John, where the Evangelist is said to have lived before he preached in the wilderness around; over mountain top after mountain top, the imaginative Alee always promising that we should see the Holy City after the next summit was reached—and we come at last upon a large modern building of new stone, and of similar architecture to the literary and scientific institutions, or the corn exchange of our country towns, but many degrees larger. This is the new Russian convent, and the bulk of the pilgrims we left at Jaffa, and who are now following us hither on foot, will rest within its walls until after Easter. It is now two P.M. on the afternoon of the 2nd of December, 1869; and as we clatter over the rough stones of Jerusalem's narrow streets, return the salute of the ragged Turkish sentry by the city walls, take possession of the rooms at the Mediterranean Hotel which our faithful dragoman engaged yesterday by telegraph from Jaffa, and prepare for a ramble before dinner to Mount Olivet and the Garden of Gethsemane—I find myself speculating whether such thrilling experiences can be real; if it be possible that we left Alexandria only three days ago, and that we could, although in the heart of Zion, reach Charing Cross in nine days.

WEEDS.

THERE is no lack now-a-days of flowers, or of those who bestow attention upon them. Whether we admire "bedding" or "foliage" plants, or whether we eschew these as frivolities, and go in for hardy perennials and herbaceous species, we have all of us a genuine love of flowers implanted in us, which will find its vent somehow or other. And just in proportion as our admiration of flowers induces us to bestow time and trouble upon bringing them to perfection, we are harassed and annoyed by the weeds which, all unbidden, spring up on every side of us, and put in an appearance even when we flatter ourselves that they

are exterminated. Yet these very weeds—taking the word in its commonly accepted signification, and in no way referring to what we call wild flowers—present many features of interest, to a few of which it is our purpose to direct the reader's attention.

First of all, what is a weed? The answer might appear to be easy; yet this question provoked, only two years ago, a discussion among scientific men, which showed that opinions, even on so trifling a subject, were by no means unanimous. Dr. Berthold Seemann, whose extensive acquaintance with the plants of various lands in their native haunts entitles his opinion to careful consideration, defines a weed as "a naturalised herb, which has a soft and membranaceous look, grows fast, propagates its kind with great rapidity, and spreads, to the prejudice of endemic or cultivated plants, in places in some way or other disturbed by the agency of man." There is much that is good in this definition, but some of the points of it are not essential to the character of a weed. In the first place, a weed need not be naturalised. Such plants as the troublesome couch-grass, the coltsfoot, and the chick-weed certainly come under this category, and their nativity is, so far as we know, unquestioned; and of these the two first have not the "soft and membranaceous look" which Dr. Seemann requires of a weed. We may, in preference, take the opinion of Dr. Trimen, who says, "A weed is any plant, irrespective of origin or appearance, occurring in cultivated ground, in addition to, and therefore more or less interfering with, and injurious to, the crop intended to be grown. A plant is a weed only in virtue of its situation; it may be an ornamental or even a useful plant in its place, but out of that place it becomes a weed. A sunflower in a field of turnips is as much a weed as *Brassica napus* (the turnip) in a flower-garden, but reverse their situations and the term is inapplicable to either." This is certainly the sense in which the word is most usually understood, and may be taken as a satisfactory definition of its meaning.

But about the word itself there is something to be said. The term weed has its full equivalent in very few languages, which is the more remarkable, in that the thing which it represents is a universal accompaniment of civilisation. According to Dr. Seemann, the word, "through the Low German verb *wüen*, to weed, the Bavarian *wüteln*, and the High German *wuchern*, to spread or multiply with more

than ordinary rapidity, is connected with Wodan, or Wuotan (Odin), the name of the supreme, all-overpowering, irresistible Saxon god, to whom Wednesday, or Wodensday, is dedicated. Singularly enough, the High German form for 'to weed' is lost, and replaced by the word *jäten*, pronounced *gäten* in some districts. I was very much puzzled about the derivation of this word, till I remembered that *Gæt* was one of the names of the god Wuotan." This derivation is ingenious, and possibly correct, but a more obvious explanation is that which connects it with the Anglo-Saxon weed, which originally signified not only weed, but also herb or grass generally; in this sense it is used by Spenser and others among the older writers. In the *Promptorium Parvulorum* (about 1440) we have "*wed*, fro noyows wedys (weede as a man wedyth corne);" "*weed*, or wyylde herbe;" and "*wede*, corn or herbys." From the last of these it must not be supposed that wheat is but another form of weed; its origin, according to Mr. Palgrave, is the Saxon *hwete*, meaning white, or the white grain, so that the distinctive phrase white wheat is a curious tautology. Whether the Anglo-Saxon weed is connected with *wæd*, meaning clothing, a word we still retain in widows' weeds, we must leave to abler philologists to determine.

Where weeds come from it is not always easy to tell. Just as we have in our gardens plants of which the native country is uncertain—of which the white lily, mignonette, walnut, and horse-chestnut are familiar examples—so, many of our commonest weeds are unknown in a state removed from cultivation. In illustration of this, we need only name the groundsel and shepherd's purse, of which Dr. Hooker says that in his many travels he has never seen either of them established where the soil was undisturbed, or where, if undisturbed, they had not obviously been brought by man or the lower animals. Besides these, we may include in our list the greater number, if not all, of the large class of plants which Mr. Watson terms "colonists"—such as poppies, cockle, fumitory, red nettle, and a host of cornfield weeds—which owe their introduction to the hand of man, are not found beyond cultivation, and, if the country could lapse to its original state, would in all probability entirely disappear. At first sight it is difficult to realise that plants, which we have been accustomed to see growing far and wide throughout the

length and breadth of the land, should be reckoned otherwise than among the original inhabitants of it; and it is only by noticing the changes in vegetation which cultivation has wrought in other countries within the memory of man, that we are enabled to understand what has occurred in our own. A brief glance at the history of American weeds will tend to make this plain, and, at the same time, present some interesting details.

As far back as 1672, in a curious little volume called *New England's Rarities*, we have a list of twenty-two plants which the author considered had "sprung up since the English planted and kept cattle in New England;" besides several others, referred to in other parts of the book, which owe their origin to the same cause. Among them he mentions the plantain, "which the Indians call Englishman's foot, as though produced by their treading." This is one of the species which always accompanies cultivation. Independently of these casual introductions, we have records of plants which have been introduced to America either for ornament or use, or by accident, and have not only thoroughly established themselves, but have become noxious weeds, and serious hindrances to agriculture. For an example of the first class, we may refer to the common yellow toad-flax, which was originally introduced to the United States as a garden flower by a Mr. Ranstead, a Welsh resident in Philadelphia, from whom it has taken the name of Ranstead-weed. The following account of the position it had attained in Pennsylvania, as long ago as 1758, will show to what an extent it had even then spread. "It is the most hurtful plant to our pastures that can grow in our northern climate. Neither the spade, plough, nor hoe can eradicate it when it is spread in a pasture. Every little fibre that is left will soon increase prodigiously; nay, some people have rolled great heaps of logs upon it, and burnt them to ashes, whereby the earth was burnt half a foot deep, yet it put up again as fresh as ever, covering the ground so close as not to let any grass grow amongst it; and the cattle can't abide it. But it doth not injure corn so much as grass, because the plough cuts off the stalks, and it doth not grow so high before harvest as to choke the corn. It is now spread over a great part of the inhabited parts of Pennsylvania. It was first introduced as a fine garden flower, but never was a plant more heartily cursed by those that suffer from its encroachments."

It is worthy of note that in our own country, where it is native, this toad-flax is almost entirely restricted to hedge-banks and borders of fields, and seldom, if ever, becomes a troublesome weed. Our common chickweed, which was introduced into Carolina as food for canary-birds, spread in ten years upwards of fifty miles, and is now one of the plants which occupy the outposts of civilisation. As an accidental introduction, we may name the Scottish thistle, which is said to have been brought to America by a Scottish minister, who brought with him a bed stuffed with thistle-down, in which some seed still remained. Feathers being plentiful, the down was soon turned out, and the former were substituted, and the seed, coming up, filled that part of the country with thistles. Another account tells us that the thistle was introduced by some enthusiastic Scot, anxious to bear with him the emblem of his country, which soon made itself at home, and became a nuisance. At the present day, it is an actionable offence in New Zealand to allow thistles to grow or to run to seed; and a case was lately reported in which action was taken against a landed proprietor who had not taken sufficient precaution to prevent their growth, the verdict being given for the plaintiff.

In 1837, one hundred and thirty-seven weeds, nearly all of them English, were more or less established in the United States; and now no less than two hundred and fourteen, similarly introduced, are enumerated by Dr. Asa Gray as occurring there. This will give an idea of the rapidity with which these introductions take place. It is not now our purpose to pursue the subject further, or we might produce examples, still more striking, of the spread of introduced weeds in Australia and New Zealand.

In conclusion, just a word may be said on the rapidity with which weeds increase. We are familiar with the proverb which tells us that "ill weeds grows apace;" but we scarcely realise, perhaps, how enormously they multiply: "the worst of creatures fastest propagate." When we know that a single plant of groundsel may produce one hundred and thirty flowers, each in turn developing fifty seeds; of chickweed, five hundred flowers, each with ten seeds; and of shepherd's-purse, one hundred and fifty flowers, each having thirty seeds, and that there might, without difficulty, be four or five crops of each of these during the year, we may see how true

it is that "one year's seeding makes seven years' weeding." Nor are these annual weeds the only ones which thus increase: a single plant of the creeping buttercup will cover a circumference of thirty feet, having no less than sixty-nine rooting scions radiating from the central shoot; and each of its many flowers is capable of ripening as many as twenty-five seeds.

DAISY'S TRIALS.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER VI.

AND how was it with Daisy now? Just thus: life seemed one uncomprehended ache. The long, lovely summer days, the long, lonely summer evenings, were full of an intolerable something, the reason of which, the nature of which, she was always vainly trying to discover. Sometimes Daisy, busy with her needle, in the house or in the garden, while Myrrha rode with Mr. Stewart, would think for hours uninterruptedly, and in these hours she thought much of her child. There was something in the world (had it been dead she knew she would have been told) which was hers, and no other's. And, instead of clasping it close, she had shut her arms and her heart against it. Therefore of her loneliness she had no right to complain.

"She will stay with me till she is married, I suppose," Daisy said to herself one evening, looking at Myrrha; "I suppose she must be married from here. Well—I hope it will be soon. I shall be glad to have it over. Will Kenneth be happy? Will Kenneth be happy? That should be my only question, my only care. Will Kenneth be happy?" She sighed. "Perhaps," she went on, "when a man is as old as Kenneth before he marries, when he marries he likes to have his wife young enough to be to him something of a child: he isn't used to sympathy and companionship, and doesn't need them. If only I could believe in Myrrha. If her childishness were more of the sweet, simple sort. But she is so strange a mixture. In some ways so old-hearted, so worldly-wise. If I could even be sure that she loves him—that she can love anything but herself."

Myrrha sat on a low chair, her face on her hand, her elbow on her knee, gazing into the fire that had been lighted to please her. She said the evening was cold, and that to be cold made her cross. She said, too, that her ride, which had been unusually short that afternoon, had been "nasty" and

"disagreeable." Her attitude was disconsolate, the expression of her face was sullen. After several timid glances at the girl, Daisy, in crossing the room, paused behind her and laid a soft hand on her shoulder.

"Myrrha," she began—her voice trembled with earnestness, and her eyes moistened as she spoke—"you are not playing with him as you tell me you have done with others, are you? Remember he is not a young man, with all the chances of life before him. He has suffered much. He has had in life much sorrow and little joy. And, Myrrha, he is so good: so noble, so patient, so unselfish, so good. Forgive me for speaking to you so, but, Myrrha, he is so dear a friend of mine, his happiness is so much to me. Tell me you love him and that you mean to be to him a good and faithful wife."

"Who in the world are you speaking about, Aunt Daisy?" Myrrha asked roughly.

"Of whom should I be speaking but of Mr. Stewart?"

"Mr. Stewart! I make Mr. Stewart 'a good and faithful wife!' You've been asleep and dreaming, Aunt Daisy."

"Do you mean, Myrrha, that you are not engaged to Mr. Stewart?"

"Certainly, I do mean, Aunt Daisy, that I am not engaged to Mr. Stewart. Why he's old enough to be my father! That you should be engaged to him, that you should make him a good and faithful wife, would be much more suitable."

"Myrrha!"

"Aunt Daisy, you're a fool—or—ah yes, I know I'm rude and rough, but I don't mean it unkindly. You love Mr. Stewart, and he's fond of you. You are always hankering after him; the idea of his marrying me has been making you look like a martyr. Why on earth don't you marry him and have done with it? I begin to think you must be married already, or something! How else is one to understand your conduct? You know he's fond of you, you know you love him as you love your life, but you 'don't mean to marry.' Now, Aunt Daisy, I've some common sense, and I know there must be more in this than meets the eye: something more than old-maidish nonsense and scruples."

Daisy had turned from pale to red, and then from red to pale, but she had been too much taken by surprise to check this outbreak, and Myrrha went on:

"I'll tell you what I think of Mr. Stewart, and then you'll understand that

I at least am not dying of love for him. I think him a detestable prig, an insufferable pedant, and a ridiculous coxcomb. You may tell him so, with my compliments, if you like, Aunt Daisy." So saying, Myrrha left the room.

In five or ten minutes she returned to it, knelt down before Daisy, and held her soft cheek to Daisy's lips. "Please forgive me, Aunt Daisy. I was abominably rude. Something had put me out."

Daisy kissed her, but did not speak. Myrrha got up, lingered irresolutely a moment, then went away.

Daisy did not attach much importance to Myrrha's plain denial of any engagement between herself and Mr. Stewart; she knew that Myrrha was clever at all kinds of prevarication, and not even appalled by positive untruth. She concluded there had been between Myrrha and Mr. Stewart some more or less serious quarrel; she had noticed that Mr. Stewart had looked gravely displeased, and had bid Miss Brown good-night very coldly.

The next day Mr. Stewart did not come to the cottage, nor the next. Myrrha had no rides; she drooped visibly. The third day Daisy noticed that Myrrha seemed always listening, and on the watch. She was much in the garden, always where she could see the gate.

In the afternoon of this third day Mr. Stewart walked over. Myrrha met him at the gate, and Daisy saw the meeting from the open drawing-room window.

Mr. Stewart was about to pass Myrrha with a bow.

She stepped in front of him. "My visit is to your Aunt Daisy, Miss Brown."

Myrrha laid her hand on his arm pleadingly. Daisy could not hear what was spoken now, the tone of both was low. But Myrrha's upturned, earnest face, and Mr. Stewart's attentive, listening attitude told her enough. Evidently Myrrha succeeded in obtaining forgiveness for whatever offence she had committed. She kept her hand upon his arm, and Myrrha laughing, Mr. Stewart trying still to look grave, they came into the house, into the drawing-room where Daisy sat.

"Aunt Daisy," Myrrha said, coming and kneeling down before her, "I am Mr. Stewart's captive, and he insists upon bringing me to your feet. Our quarrel the other day—the quarrel that made me so cross—was about you, Aunt Daisy. Mr. Stewart will only forgive me on condition that I express my sorrow for having spoken

rudely and falsely. I express my sorrow for having spoken rudely and falsely. Please forgive me, and then I shall be taken for some rides again!"

Daisy leaned down and kissed her.

Myrrha sprang up.

"There, now I shall get a ride to-morrow, shan't I, Mr. Stewart?"

"Certainly, if you wish, and if the weather allow."

"All the same," muttered Myrrha, nodding to herself as she moved away, "I said nothing but what was true."

And so, for a little while, things went on just as before again.

One day, Mr. Stewart asked Daisy to show Myrrha some of her sketches, adding: "I'm surprised to find she didn't even know you could draw."

"I never do draw now."

"But you will let her see how you used to draw. If my memory is at all accurate, she will be able to learn a good deal—should she choose to do so—by looking over your portfolio. May I fetch it? Is it where I can find it?"

"No; I must look for it myself."

Daisy went to her room and dragged a large old portfolio out of a closet; hastily turning over its contents she withdrew several sketches, which she put away out of sight. They were studies of foreign scenes, and would have led to much questioning. She sent the folio down-stairs, and was a few minutes before she followed it. It was painful to her to have looked it over; it was ruffling too many pages of memory.

Daisy, when she returned to the drawing-room, sat apart, took up a book, and tried not to turn the attention of either her eyes or her ears towards the table where Myrrha and Mr. Stewart sat. She was not long left in peace.

"Where is this, Daisy?" Mr. Stewart asked. "An old farm-house I don't remember to have seen. A curious study of greens and greys."

Daisy looked up: Mr. Stewart held in his hand a careful drawing of Moor-Edge farm-house, made long ago, before it had come to be the house of her dear old nurse. Daisy paused, her colour changed: she answered, trying to speak carelessly:

"That is the farm-house nurse expected to go to when she married. She asked me to make her a picture of it. I did that for her before she was married. I thought she had it."

"Didn't she go to it, then? Isn't this where you stayed with her?"

"Oh no."

Mr. Stewart then was evidently about to ask something more. But Daisy, though she tried not to do so, looked up at him. There must have been terror and appeal in her eyes, for his were inquiring and compassionate. Daisy's look, falling from Mr. Stewart's face, fixed itself on the picture: a trance-like feeling came over her, as if she had suddenly begun to dream. It was as if out of those walls and windows, no longer pictured but real, her child cried to her; and in her heart there was a responsive cry. By-and-bye, when she thought she could do so unobserved, she rose up and left the room. Unobserved! One pair of love-watchful eyes, one pair that shone with somewhat malicious curiosity, noticed the feebleness with which she moved.

"Aunt Daisy is not well. Hadn't I better go to her?"

"I think she would rather be alone."

"Aunt Daisy has just told you a falsehood, and telling falsehoods doesn't agree with poor dear Aunt Daisy. You have often spoken of Aunt Daisy as a model of candour and simple truth. I admit she isn't clever at speaking what isn't true; and doesn't seem to be used to it!"

"Your Aunt Daisy is a model of candour and simple truth. Speaking of her as such, I spoke truly of her."

"Yet she has just told you a lie. You know that as well as I do!"

"I think, Miss Brown, it would be more becoming in you to refrain from such free speaking."

Myrrha appeared not to hear this remark. She said, with a show of feeling:

"Sometimes, Mr. Stewart, I feel afraid that poor Aunt Daisy is very unhappy; that she has some secret which preys upon her. If she has, wouldn't she tell it to you who are such an old friend? If you told her you were sure she had a secret, and begged her to tell it to you, don't you think she would?"

Myrrha gave a quick, investigating glance into Mr. Stewart's face. She was wondering if he already knew or guessed Aunt Daisy's secret. A secret there was, she was by this time quite sure.

"You young girls are so full of romantic fancies in this novel-reading age. Your Aunt Daisy is not the sort of woman to have anything concerning herself to conceal. If she has a secret it is not her own. Possibly, that former her old nurse married has got into difficulties, and she has promised not to tell any one where he is now living."

"You suspect something quite different from that," said Myrrha, nodding knowingly. "That is a quite absurdly inadequate cause for things I have noticed. I have my own suspicions, but——"

"I will not have your Aunt Daisy and 'suspicions' named together," he answered, angrily. Then he went on more calmly: "You entirely fail to understand your Aunt Daisy's character. Though she may have more delicacy and reserve of feeling than is usual in these days, she is not a woman to have secrets and concealments. Where she loves she would trust."

"But perhaps, Mr. Stewart, poor Aunt Daisy, who seems so lonely, has never loved any one enough to trust them entirely."

Those words of Myrrha's fell coldly on Mr. Stewart's heart. Myrrha went on: "You see, Mr. Stewart, Aunt Daisy is so peculiarly lonely. I am the only connexion, not to say relation, she has whom she knows. And I don't think she loves me very much, and I know she doesn't trust me at all. Whom else has she?"

"So you evidently don't think, Miss Brown, that your Aunt Daisy loves and trusts me?"

"I can only answer by stating facts. Aunt Daisy has, I am sure, a secret. You don't know it, she doesn't mean you to know it. I suppose, therefore, she doesn't trust you. As to loving you, it wouldn't, of course, be proper she should love you, unless as her lover; and, it seems, she won't have you as that. You are a man, you are no relation, you are not a proper person for Aunt Daisy to love and trust, unless she meant to marry you. Aunt Daisy doesn't mean to marry you. Aunt Daisy isn't the sort of woman to do what isn't proper, therefore, I suppose, she doesn't love and trust you."

"How logical!"

"You needn't sneer at me."

"How is it you state so positively that your Aunt Daisy doesn't mean to marry me?"

"Hasn't she told you so herself?" was Myrrha's counter-question.

"I was asking the reason of your belief."

"She has told me that she doesn't mean to marry; and I'm quite, quite sure that there's some serious secret at the bottom of her not meaning to marry."

"You can't, I suppose, understand that there may be women who don't wish to marry, merely because they don't wish to marry?"

"You mean that for impertinence;—but——"

Here the entrance of a servant, asking for Daisy, interrupted them; soon after Daisy herself came into the room. Within a few minutes of that Mr. Stewart rose to take his leave.

"Myrrha," he said, bluntly, "I want a few words alone with your Aunt Daisy."

He spoke holding the door open.

"You mean I am to go away?"

"If I may so far trouble you."

She swept out, giving him, as she passed him, a somewhat mocking smile and a significant nod.

Daisy looked frightened, and began to tremble. "Is anything the matter? If it is only—about Myrrha—you needn't trouble to tell me. I know."

"It is not about Myrrha, it is about myself and yourself. It is only a word. I want no answer. You needn't speak. I only want you to know that I am changed in nothing—that I am ready, that I am longing, to take all your cares and troubles, of whatever kind they may be (remember, I say it, and I mean it, of whatever kind they may be), to be my cares and troubles. Twice lately you have said to me what was not true, Daisy; more than I can tell you it has hurt me that you should do that; but I trust you, nevertheless. You needn't speak. I merely wish you to know that I am waiting for you still, that I shall always wait for you till I get you. That as much as ever I wanted you, which is as much as a man ever wanted a woman, I still want you for my wife."

Daisy was now trembling very visibly. He went away before she had said any other word.

"With all your cares and troubles of whatever nature," she repeated. "What a stress he laid upon that. To think how he loves me! And how I love him! And I may not tell him I love him, love him, love him! May not throw my arms round his dear neck, and say, 'Take me, do with me anything you will.'"

Daisy dreamt, wide-eyed, of the deliciousness of such surrender. Then Myrrha came in.

"Well, Aunt Daisy, may I congratulate you? Do you still say you don't mean to marry?"

"Yes, Myrrha, there is no change." But she felt as if there were change—as if the whole world had changed. She wished the girl good-night, and locked herself into her own room.

Daisy had no sleep that night. All the fight was fought over again. All the perplexity of her trouble was reawakened; but

the core of her consciousness was sweet, was love. When she drew aside her curtains, and looked out into a fair, still autumn dawn, she said:

"He shall have the truth. It will tear my life out to tell him; but he has a right to my life. He shall have the truth. Things shan't go on in this way any longer. I am wasting his life. He shall have the truth." It had come, she felt, to the ultimate extremity—she must now say to Kenneth: "All this time I have been deceiving you. I have been a wife. I am a mother. You think me innocent, loving, truthful. I hated my husband. I deserted my child. I have lied with my whole life. I have deceived you."

At first she thought she would write her confession; but she felt as if she must know how he would look when he heard it, how he would feel it, how he would bear it.

Mr. Stewart, when he came to the cottage next morning, found Myrrha still in her morning dress, standing at the gate.

"You have forgotten we settled it would not any longer be too warm for morning rides?"

Myrrha made no answer, except:

"Oh, Mr. Stewart!"

He saw that she had been crying, and looked painfully excited; he was off his horse and at her side in a moment.

"Is anything the matter? Your Aunt Daisy is not ill?"

"Send the man away," commanded Myrrha.

"Not till I know I shall not want him."

"Come out of his hearing then."

With a muttered, "Confound the girl," Mr. Stewart followed Myrrha from the gate. Myrrha presently stopped, turned and faced him with the words:

"Mr. Stewart, Aunt Daisy is gone."

"Gone." He stood quite still a moment. Then he went to the gate to order his groom to take the horses back; to have his hunter saddled, and waiting at the corner of the lane in as short a time as possible.

"Now, Myrrha, just the simple truth of all you know, as quickly as possible," he said, returning to her. "What do you mean when you say that your Aunt Daisy is gone?"

"Mean? I mean just what I say. Aunt Daisy is gone!"

"When? How? Where?"

"I don't know anything about where: I know very little about anything; and what I do know I won't tell you if you speak so crossly, and look so angry, as if

it were my fault. As if I were not as great a sufferer as anybody. As if I hadn't had enough to shake my nerves already." And Myrrha began to sob.

"There, there," said Mr. Stewart soothingly. "I beg your pardon if I was ungentle. Now be a good, sensible girl, Myrrha, forget yourself for once, and just tell me what there is to tell. Not much I expect. It will prove to be a much-adobut-nothing sort of story. Come, just tell me all you know." He took her hand, drew it through his arm, and led her to a garden-seat. Myrrha dried her eyes and sat down.

"It was a letter did it, Mr. Stewart, a letter that came this morning—of this I feel quite sure. But she told me nothing, she never trusted me. I know nothing. But I'm sure it's something very bad. I believe we shall never see her again. I fancy, I've an impression, that she's gone away to drown herself."

Here Myrrha, who was vaguely alarmed, and had a very genuine consciousness of the discomfort of her own position, began to sob again.

"I want neither your beliefs, nor fancies, nor impressions, nor any such nonsense as you have just spoken. Just tell me, from the beginning, what took place. First, when you say it was a letter did it, what do you mean by 'did it'?"

"I mean frightened her so that she ran away."

"Run away, pshaw! Possibly she heard of the illness of some friend, and is gone for the day, to be back at night."

"Mr. Stewart, it was much more than that!" Myrrha said, with angry solemnity. "She is not coming back. She told me as good as that she was not coming back."

"Her words—tell me in what words she said she was not coming back." Quite unintentionally he slightly shook Myrrha's arm as he spoke. Myrrha withdrew it indignantly.

"How rough, how unkind you are!" she exclaimed. "You might have some feeling for me, Mr. Stewart; I'm sure I'm to be pitied. What can I do? What will become of me? I can't, young as I am, stay here alone, and where am I to go?"

"We will settle all that afterwards: the first thing is for me to know all I can about your Aunt Daisy. What were her words when she 'as good as told you' she was not coming back?"

"She said that if she didn't come back, I was to ask you for advice; that you would be a true friend to me."

"Was that this morning, or last night?"

"This morning."

"And about the letter? It came by post?"

"I suppose so; the post was in when I came down. I was late this morning, for I didn't sleep well last night, and I woke with a headache; one of my very bad headaches. I've been subject to them ever since——"

"Never mind about your headaches just now. Your aunt had read this letter, to which you attach so much importance, when you came down?"

"No; and I don't think she had seen it. It lay under one for me."

"You saw nothing different from usual in your Aunt Daisy till she read that letter?"

"No. She flushed up when I gave it to her. I didn't suppose it could be interesting, and I was surprised to see her flush."

"Why didn't you suppose it could be interesting?"

"It didn't look like a gentleman's letter, or a lady's. I didn't pay any particular attention to her as she read the letter, because my own letter was very interesting," (with a conscious air), "and it was long. I didn't notice Aunt Daisy till I'd finished it, and then——"

"Well?"

"Then I looked up, and was going to tell her something" (this spoken with that same conscious air), "but I saw her looking so that she frightened me."

"How did she look?"

"She looked awful, just like a person coming out of a bad swoon."

"What did she say?"

"Of course I asked her what was the matter. At first she didn't seem alive enough to speak. The first thing she did say was just to ask me to ring the bell for Mrs. Moss."

"Well? when Mrs. Moss came, what did your Aunt Daisy say to her?"

"She just told her she'd had bad news, and must go away."

"Go away for a day or so, she said, of course?"

"She said nothing of the sort. She only told Mrs. Moss to pack a few things for her as quickly as possible, and to send at once to the village to order the fly."

"To take her where?"

"To the station."

"Well, go on."

"That is all."

"You have nothing more to tell me?"

"Nothing."

"Child, why in the name of all that was irrational, didn't you send to me at once?"

"She told me not to do so."

"She left no message for me?"

"Yes she did."

"Myrrha, you would try any man's patience. What was it? And why didn't you deliver it at once?"

"Have you given me time? Haven't I had enough to do in answering your questions? The message was only this—I was to tell Kenneth that she would soon write: that, meanwhile, he was not to be anxious for her, that no harm had happened to her, or, as far as she knew, was likely to happen to her."

"No harm had happened to her, or, as far as she knew, was likely to happen to her!" Mr. Stewart repeated this to himself, as he went off to find Mrs. Moss. From her he gathered no further information; but it somewhat reassured him to find that she evidently expected her mistress's return within a very short time.

"You should have gone with her, Mrs. Moss."

"Sir, she forbade it utterly."

Mr. Stewart went into the breakfast-room. He looked about there keenly and searchingly, possibly hoping to find the envelope of the letter, and so to get some clue. Presently Myrrha stood beside him.

"Mr. Stewart," she said, in a just audible whisper, "what can it mean? Won't you tell me what you think is the matter? The more I think about it the more frightened I get. Aunt Daisy had a strange look in her eyes sometimes, quite like a person who had been, or might be, mad. I feel sure she had some dreadful trouble to hide. I can't help thinking that she has gone away to destroy herself."

Mr. Stewart turned upon Myrrha savagely; but the girl looked so white, so scared, such a fragile, unstable creature, that instead of the harsh words that rose to his lips, what he spoke was mere reassuring banter. Then he stood, perhaps ten minutes, contemplating his own hand apparently, seeing nothing, and thinking profoundly.

"What are you going to do?" asked Myrrha, when he moved.

"Going to do? I'm going to find her—to take care of her. She is not fit to be alone and in trouble. It is what you say, of how ill she looked, that makes me

anxious: otherwise, of course, one would merely wait till she came home."

"Mr. Stewart, what shall I do? She told me to ask you."

"What shall you do? Why just stay here quietly till your Aunt Daisy comes back."

"She will never come back."

"Or, if you prefer to do so—if you think you shall be lonely here—just return to your friends. That might be best—to return to your friends."

"I have no friends to whom I can return."

"Stay here, then, for the present. For the present, Myrrha, I have no thought to spare for your affairs."

"Of course not. I never expected you would have. I knew you would be far too much alarmed about poor Aunt Daisy."

"I'm not alarmed, but I'm anxious."

"She told me to do all I could to comfort you; but, of course, I know I can do nothing. And she said you would be kind to me."

"So I will be, by-and-bye, when I've time to think about you. Good-bye, now." And so he left her.

"He cares more for Aunt Daisy's little finger than for me, and all the world besides. And I do like him. And I love Redcombe. And I can't go home, and I won't go out as a governess, and what am I to do? What will become of me?"

And Myrrha burst into passionate crying. It didn't matter if she did make her eyes red and her face swollen; there was no one to see her, and there would be nobody; at which terribly pathetic thought her sobs and tears burst forth afresh.

Mr. Stewart, as he went away, thought to himself: "Of any woman but Daisy, acting as she acts, speaking as she speaks, one would have the most serious suspicions. But Daisy is, has been, and will be, Daisy."

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